

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLGB #0461 1921245
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 101245Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5440
INFO RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 0347
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 1162
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1931
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0482
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0262
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 1259
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0523

UNCLAS KIGALI 000461

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RW](#)
SUBJECT: SENATOR NELSON VISITS RWANDA

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Senator Bill Nelson (D - FL) visited Rwanda July 4-6, meeting separately with President Kagame and National Security Service General Secretary Emmanuel Ndahiro, discussing Rwanda's regeneration after the 1994 genocide and intelligence matters, respectively. He also lunched with Senate leadership, visited the Gisozi genocide memorial, and dined privately with Cabinet Affairs Minister Charles Murigande. At the conclusion of his trip, he addressed the local press corps with President Kagame, applauding Rwanda's ongoing efforts to develop its people and promote national unity. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Senator Nelson, accompanied by several aides and his wife Grace Nelson, visited Rwanda on the July 4th weekend. After a welcoming July 4th dinner with Ambassador Arietti and members of the country team, Senator Nelson began his July 5th appointments with briefings at the embassy and a meeting with National Security Service chief Emmanuel Ndahiro on intelligence matters. Separately, his wife toured Gahaya Links, a basket-weaving cooperative that employs rural women, including many genocide survivors, and which markets its products to Macys and other U.S. retailers. A lunch with Rwandan Senate leadership followed at the Milles Collines, the hotel on which the Hollywood film Hotel Rwanda was based.

¶3. (SBU) At the lunch, the senators discussed the impact of the 1994 genocide on Rwandan society and politics, and the upcoming September Parliamentary elections for the Chamber of Deputies. The four senators, representing Rwanda's two major ethnic groups (Hutu and Tutsi) and three of its nine political parties, also discussed with Senator Nelson and his staff their fundraising mechanisms, constituent services, and political platforms. Two of the senators also told harrowing stories of their narrow survival in Kigali during the genocide. Following the lunch, Senator Nelson and staff visited the Gisozi genocide memorial, burial ground for over 258,000 Rwandans killed in Kigali in 1994.

¶4. (SBU) As the highlight of his visit, Senator Nelson and staff, paid a call on President Paul Kagame. Mrs. Nelson paid a simultaneous call on Mrs. Kagame. Nelson began by commending what he termed Kagame's "remarkable compassion" at the end of the 1994 genocide, opting for efforts to rebuild the nation and strive for national unity. Nelson also saluted Rwanda's great progress in combating HIV/AIDS, and pledged continuing USG efforts to assist with HIV/AIDS and anti-malaria efforts.

¶5. (SBU) In unusually extended and personal terms, President Kagame replied that neither he nor any of the other founding members of the RPA/RPF could possibly have imagined that they would take power "in a ruined nation with a million

people dead." He and his colleagues, armed and civilian, had long planned the sort of society they wished to build, with peace, security and reconciliation as fundamental principles. As refugees, long denied a place in their own nation, said the president, "we knew what injustice meant." Yet everything, he said, became so much more difficult as a result of the war, death and destruction of 1994. With the start of a brutal insurgency immediately after the genocide, the president added, "our burdens increased." However, he said, "we stayed on our feet, kept our balance," and began to rebuild the nation.

¶6. (SBU) In a joint press appearance at the conclusion of their meeting, Senator Nelson applauded Rwanda's ongoing efforts to develop its people and promote national unity. He then proceeded to a private dinner with Cabinet Affairs Minister Charles Murigande. Senator and Mrs. Nelson and staff departed Kigali on Sunday morning, July 6.

¶7. (SBU) Senator Nelson did not clear this message.
ARIETTI